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RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 0008  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0039  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0003  
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC 0026

C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 001459

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/12/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [UZ](#)  
SUBJECT: Uzbekistan Scenesetter for LTG Allen

CLASSIFIED BY: BERLINER, NICHOLAS; (B), (D)

11. (C) Embassy Tashkent warmly welcomes your visit to Uzbekistan as an important opportunity to build on recent progress in U.S.-Uzbekistan cooperation. Your meetings will primarily be an opportunity to exchange views on the situation in Afghanistan with Government of Uzbekistan (GOU) officials and respond to their negative assessments by spelling out our strategic vision. This will also be a chance to acknowledge the progress we are making with the GOU in setting up a Northern Distribution Network (NDN) and underscore the important role this will play. Our bilateral relations have improved since reaching a low ebb two years ago. We have seen the beginnings of a dialogue with the GOU on human rights, democracy and rule of law, however significant problems remain that create tensions in our bilateral relations. Our message to the GOU (and to Washington) is that cooperation on security cannot happen to the exclusion of other issues and we expect to work productively across the spectrum. The Uzbeks would like to take a more gradualist approach in this area, but know that they cannot ignore it either.

U.S. Strategic Vision on Afghanistan

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12. (C) GOU officials across the board are very pessimistic about the current course of events in Afghanistan. Although the Uzbeks want and need us to succeed, they believe we are losing the fight and may not exclude even the possibility of a return of the Taliban to power. The Uzbeks have absolutely no faith in Hamid Karzai or in democratic government and repeatedly express the view that Afghanistan needs a 'strong man' leader. This belief also serves to justify what has been a relatively low level of engagement on the part of the GOU in Afghanistan and the position expressed by President Karimov at the April 2-4 North Atlantic Treaty Organization/Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council summit in Bucharest that problems be discussed in a format that excludes the Karzai government. The "6 plus 3" proposal envisions the creation of a United Nations-administered "Contact Group" consisting of the states bordering Afghanistan--Iran, China, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan--plus Russia, the United States, and NATO. We insist that any regional format for discussing Afghanistan must include the elected government of Afghanistan.

¶3. (C) We recommend that you outline the U.S. strategic vision for achieving success in Afghanistan and dispel any doubts the Uzbeks may have about our on-going commitment to helping the Afghans build a peaceful and stable state. At the same time, this is an opportunity to highlight the opportunity that exists for Uzbekistan to display regional leadership in international efforts to achieve stability in Afghanistan. The GOU shares U.S. goals of peace and stability in Afghanistan, but they can do more.

#### Northern Distribution Network (NDN)

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¶4. (C) One area where the GOU is being supportive is on NDN, which your GOU interlocutors will raise and these meetings will be an opportunity to acknowledge. During the recent visit of TRANSCOM Commanding General McNabb, the GOU gave its support to NDN, although we are still in the process of working out the modalities of the commercial arrangements. We have general agreement to use the airport at Navoi in south central Uzbekistan for commercial cargo flights and to transport these goods by rail or by road to Afghanistan. NATO is negotiating a rail transit agreement with Uzbekistan and we are looking at how utilization of this agreement could cover the preponderance of cargo bound for Afghanistan. The Uzbeks were bitter over the experience of K2, but are ready to work with us on a purely commercial basis for the transit of non-lethal cargo.

#### Counter-narcotics Cooperation

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¶5. (C) Narcotics trafficking is a growing threat to Uzbekistan, the blame for which the GOU pins largely on what it sees as the failure to stabilize Afghanistan. The Uzbeks are anxious to secure counter-narcotics cooperation, particularly in as much as this would lead to donations of equipment and technology - and they view CENTCOM as a source of this assistance. Where they have been less forthcoming is in consenting to allow the Drug Enforcement Administration return to Tashkent, a condition we have said is a sine qua non for any sort of counter narcotics cooperation with the U.S. These meetings will be an opportunity to repeat this point.

#### Human Rights and Democracy

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¶6. (C) Uzbekistan maintains a dubious position among the ranks of countries perceived as congenital human rights abusers. This is a serious issue here and, although the picture is somewhat more complex than is widely appreciated, Uzbekistan has a long way to go until international standards are fully upheld and respected. We have taken the position that engagement will offer us the greatest chance to effect change here and the GOU has made some steps recently, including release of some political prisoners, passage of a law on habeas corpus, progress in fighting trafficking in persons (TIP) and allowing the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to resume prison visits. Your visit offers yet another opportunity to express appreciation for our ongoing dialogue on democracy and human rights, and reaffirm our shared interest in Uzbekistan's continuing reforms.

## Economy

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¶7. (C) Uzbekistan has the largest population in Central Asia (approx 28 million), but its economy has lagged behind that of resource-rich Kazakhstan. The Uzbeks have yet to feel the full brunt of the global economic crisis and have expressed with some smugness their feeling of vindication of their state-controlled economic model. However, Uzbekistan is not immune from global events, particularly as it relies on remittances from the millions of Uzbeks who have left to seek work in Russia and Kazakhstan. The drying up of these flows and the return of potentially hundreds of thousands of unemployed men is something the GOU is concerned about, and with good reason.

## Central Asian Sensitivities

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¶8. (C) It is all too easy to offend Uzbek pride, which the uncertainties surrounding the timing of your visit seem to have done with some of our more thin-skinned friends at the Foreign Ministry. Nevertheless, we are certain that the Uzbeks will be happy to receive you and will look forward to hearing the vision that you and General Petraeus have set for Afghanistan, as well as offering their own input. We look forward to seeing you in Tashkent on December 18.  
NORLAND

To view the entire SMART message, go to URL [http://repository.state.sgov.gov/layouts/OSSSearchResults.aspx?k=messageid:bc026\\_d3a-13a1-4c99-87a8-838ed4e2f7ab](http://repository.state.sgov.gov/layouts/OSSSearchResults.aspx?k=messageid:bc026_d3a-13a1-4c99-87a8-838ed4e2f7ab)